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DDI 3849-83

26 May 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

FROM:

Acting Chief, Product Evaluation Staff

SUBJECT: SSCI and HPSCI Staff Review of PES Study on Central America

1. In accordance with arrangements agreed to by the DCI and others on 13 May 1983, PES took steps to make available to the SSCI and HPSCI staff the recent PES evaluation of DI production on Central America.

2. On 24 May, the undersigned handcarried the PES report to Rob Simmons, Staff Director, SSCI. After reviewing the study, Simmons called it an excellent exposition of the problems involved and a fair, balanced assessment. He also endorsed the general approach which PES has been using in its evaluations—that is, picking active, substantive issues to examine, thereby avoiding the perjorative and essentially negative approach typical of postmortems. Simmons' only minor disagreement with the findings of the PES study was on the question of DI participation in the policy process; Simmons believes that distance from the process is preferable to proximity. We both agreed that intelligence officers need to keep the dangers of proximity in mind no matter how far or close they are to the policy process.

3. Simmons expressed regret that we did not plan to make the report more widely available to the Committee, especially to Senator Lugar, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Analysis and Production, and to the minority staff chief. (Technically, Simmons said he is obliged to share everything in his "possession" with the minority staff chief.) In closing, I indicated to Simmons that the DDCI might refer to the PES study in his statement to the Committee the following day; Simmons indicated that if he did, the Committee could then request a copy of the report. (The DDCI and ADDI were so informed.)

4. During the course of our discussion, Simmons suggested that the yellow rain issue would be another good subject for PES to examine. He thinks that there was a distortion of both the collection and analytic process on this issue in the past—for political reasons—and indicated that the SSCI staff would be taking a look at the problem this summer with an eye toward possible SSCI hearings in the fall.

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5. On 25 May 1983 Tom Latimer, Staff Director, HPSCI, came to Headquarters to review the Central America study. Latimer was also complimentary of the study, although he felt that the Key Judgments of the report were less critical of the product and the process than the basic text. In his other comments, Latimer focused primarily on the collection problems cited in the report. He was struck both by the divergent views within the Community on the effectiveness of various collection efforts and by the need for more vigorous pursuit of nontraditional, nonclandestine sources; he strongly endorsed the PES recommendations on the latter point. He also expressed the hope that steps would be taken soon to ensure more direct DI access to the policy process on this increasingly important issue.

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cc: DDCI
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